

LEICESTERSHIRE ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

*THE BUTTERFLIES OF THE
HINCKLEY DISTRICT*

by

Ray Morris

Occasional Publications Series

Number: 6

Date: December 1990

ISSN 0957 - 1019

THE BUTTERFLIES OF THE HINCKLEY DISTRICT

Ray Morris, 142 Hinckley Road, Barwell, Leics LE9 8DN

INTRODUCTION

The butterflies are probably the most familiar of the insects with the first sightings of brimstone, peacock and small tortoiseshell heralding the start of spring as they emerge from hibernation. All British butterflies are active in daylight hours thus separating them from the majority of moths. Additionally, British butterflies (but not necessarily elsewhere) can be readily distinguished from day-flying moths by the presence of clubbed antennae. The only possible confusion which may arise is with the moth-like skippers but close examination of the antennae will help identification.

The taxonomy of the British butterflies varies according to the literature consulted. In the present study the system of nomenclature used by Emmet & Heath in "The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland" (MGBGI) has been followed. According to this nomenclature five families of butterflies are found in Britain.

Hesperiidae (skippers) - grassland insects often associated with woodland edge and hedgerows; moth-like when at rest and easily overlooked because of their unobtrusive behaviour.

Papilionidae (swallowtails) - the British swallowtail is restricted to parts of East Anglia.

Pieridae (whites, sulphurs) - perhaps the most familiar of the British butterflies being found in a range of habitats; the clouded yellow is an occasional migrant; it is thought by some that migratory large whites may swell local populations although this is disputed by others.

Lycaenidae (blues, coppers, hairstreaks) - the blues and coppers are mainly grassland species while the hairstreaks tend to prefer more scrubby locations.

Nymphalidae (admirals, fritillaries, browns) - the showy admirals and vanessids are unmistakable often being seen in gardens although the white admiral is usually encountered in its preferred woodland habitat; the fritillaries are fast-flying butterflies whose range in Britain is decreasing; the browns may well be the commonest of the butterflies in the British Isles but are sometimes overlooked.

THE STUDY AREA

The Hinckley study area covers the whole of the ordnance survey square SP49 with some parts of adjoining squares also being included (Morris, 1989). The distribution maps in this

paper use the tetrad (2x2km square) recording system. It is recognised that the maps are, at best, provisional pending further, more extensive, recording in the district (Figure 1).

The area is predominantly arable farmland with some grazing. Burbage Common is the largest area of unimproved grassland in the district. The neighbouring Burbage and Sheepy Woods, together with Aston Firs, are the largest areas of woodland in the Hinckley area with the exception of Ambion Wood near Market Bosworth. Throughout the area numerous small spinneys can be found while areas of relatively unimproved grassland can be found at Fosse Meadows near Sharnford, Shenton Cutting, Croft nature reserve and on the outskirts of Burbage adjacent to the A447 leading to the M69 motorway.

The area also includes the Ashby canal and the upper reaches of the river Soar. Several disused quarries are located in the Earl Shilton area but these are slowly losing their natural history value because of infilling activities. The main population centre is Hinckley/Burbage with several surrounding large villages such as Barwell and Earl Shilton.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Much of the data presented in this paper has been gathered from relatively few sources. The Leicestershire Museums Service and the Hinckley & District Natural History Society have both kindly allowed access to their records. Mark Baker, countryside ranger at Burbage Common & Woods has contributed findings whilst surveying the wildlife of the site. John Gladman contributed records from the Ambion Wood and Shenton area. The Leicestershire & Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation allowed access to their reserve records for Shenton Cutting, Ambion Wood and Croft Glebeland reserves. A substantial amount of data was generated by the "Garden Butterfly Survey" conducted by the South West Group of LRTNC during the summer of 1989 (to be published). Other records have been gleaned from the entomological literature.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Unlike many parts of Britain, and even of Leicestershire, the Hinckley district has been little studied for its insect fauna until recent times. In the early part of the twentieth century, the Hinckley Field Club carried out limited surveys of plants and birds in the area but not, apparently, of insects. Reference to the butterflies of Leicestershire, and occasionally of the Hinckley district, was made in the Victoria County History (Bouskell, 1907). In addition, some early observations on butterflies in the area can be found in the entomological press, notably by H Buckler and DP Murray.

The advent of the Hinckley & District Natural History Society, together with its neighbour the Market Bosworth Natural History Society, resulted in a greater interest in the wild-life of the area during the 1970s and to the present day. However, it was not until 1981 that an attempt was made to catalogue the area's butterflies (Arnold, Arnold & Thomas, 1981) which reported the observations of amateur naturalists in North Warwickshire and South West Leicestershire.

This report included nineteen species of butterflies but the main drawbacks of the publication were the paucity of detailed information and the lack of historical data.

In 1985 Baker, Gameson & Morley listed the butterflies seen at the Burbage Common and Woods complex as part of an ecological survey of the site with a view to recommending a management scheme. They listed eighteen butterfly species with some interesting transect data which indicated the high incidence of the meadow brown at the Common. A further transect study was carried out during the summer of 1990 and the results of this survey will be compared to those obtained in 1984 (referred to above) in a paper to be published in this Occasional Publications Series at a future date.

A provisional listing of the butterflies of the Hinckley district, based upon the observations of members of the Hinckley & District Natural History Society, was drawn up by Morris in 1988. This first attempt at a local list included some historical data but did not include records from the reserves of the Leicestershire & Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation (Shenton Cutting, Ambion Wood, Croft Glebelands).

In 1989 amateur naturalists in the south west of Leicestershire cooperated in reporting butterflies seen in garden situations although many reported sightings from other locations. This added greatly to our knowledge of the commoner species in the district and may have resulted in the rediscovery of the wood white in Leicestershire. The data generated by this survey is still being analysed and will be reported in due course. It is planned to repeat this survey during 1991.

The current presentation aims to bring together all known records of butterflies in the Hinckley district up to the end of 1990 and to comment upon the status of each species in the area. However, it is accepted that the report is likely to be incomplete because of observer bias e.g. some areas may not have been recorded while historical records remain to be uncovered.

THE STATUS OF BUTTERFLIES IN THE HINCKLEY DISTRICT

A total of thirty two species of butterfly have been recorded in the area at one time or another. Information obtained during the 1980s has shown that some species have increased in number in the area e.g. gatekeeper and speckled wood. Some species have either declined or disappeared entirely from the district e.g. white admiral, green hairstreak. Others are present as small vulnerable remnant populations e.g. purple hairstreak.

In other parts of the country, agricultural practices have been blamed for the decline in British butterfly populations. In the Hinckley district the destruction of most of the grassland by farming and the continuing growth of the urban sprawl have, without a doubt, contributed to the demise of some butterflies in the area. While gardens may provide useful feeding stations with *Buddleia*, *Rudbeckia*, *Sedum* etc, the majority of butterflies do not seem to breed in such artificial habitats. The continued demand on the

countryside around Hinckley, particularly for roads, housing and industrial developments, further threatens the survival of butterflies in the district.

The reintroduction of management at Burbage and Sheepy Woods may result in the reappearance of the white admiral. It is possible that active management of Ambion Wood may also encourage the return of this butterfly to the district along with a strengthening of the remnant purple hairstreak population. The presence of ringlet butterflies at Burbage Common, the only substantial piece of relatively unimproved grassland in the district, is encouraging but its spread from the site to other possibly suitable habitats is restricted by urban sprawl on one side and intensive agriculture on the other.

The lack of management at Shenton Cutting reserve has seen a severe decline in the numbers of common blue and small copper butterflies which rely upon short grass swards for their foodplants, such as birds foot trefoil, to thrive. In this particular case, scrub encroachment is an additional problem. The Ashby canal is increasingly being "improved" for recreational use e.g. fishing, walking, boating. As a result much of the hedgerow and waterside plants are not being allowed to thrive as priority is given to human access rather than to wildlife.

The majority of copses in the district are overgrown and require urgent management if they are to be suitable havens for wildlife. An example of how beneficial management can be is the reintroduction of woodcraft at the Brake Spinney (Peckleton), a private reserve of the Hinckley & District Natural History Society, where speckled wood butterflies, virtually unknown less than ten years ago, are now commonplace. Grassy areas, such as Croft Hill, are being threatened by quarrying or are coming under the plough. Other quarries are being filled with refuse thus destroying potentially important sites.

The butterfly fauna of the Hinckley district is not exceptional with one or two species being vulnerable. Without active management of sites for wildlife conservation and the protection of some vulnerable locations from the ravages of housing, agricultural and industrial developments, the future for butterflies in the Hinckley district looks bleak.

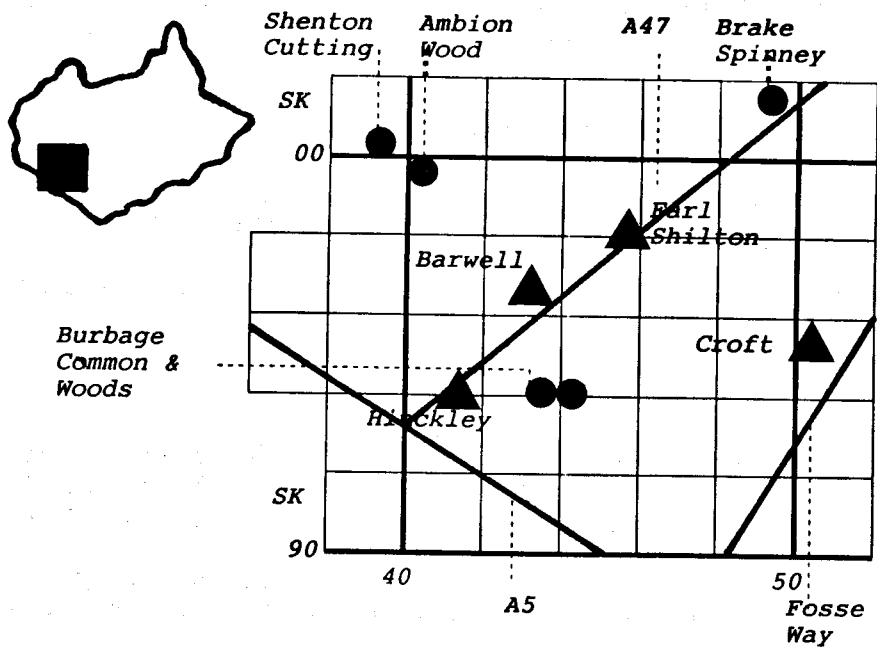
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Leicestershire Museums Service, the Leicestershire & Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation and the Hinckley & District Natural History Society for access to their records. In addition, my thanks go to Mark Baker and John Gladman for information from the Burbage Common & Woods complex and the Market Bosworth area respectively. Finally, I recognise the input of many local amateur naturalists during the 1989 Garden Butterfly Survey.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anon (1990). Wood white at Croft? *LES Newsletter*, 4, 9.
- Arnold, GA, Arnold, MA & Thomas, RJ (1981). A provisional list of the macrolepidoptera of Nuneaton, Tamworth, Hinckley, Bedworth, Atherstone and Market Bosworth area. Privately produced report.
- Baker, MR, Gameson, TA & Morley, R (1985). An ecological survey and management plan for Burbage Common and Woods. Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.
- Buckler, H (1938). *Polygonia c-album* in Leicestershire 1936 and 1937. *Entomologist*, 71, 91.
- Buckler, H (1954). *List of lepidoptera of Leicestershire*. Manuscript held by the Leicestershire Museums Service.
- Bouskell, F (1907). Lepidoptera. In "Victoria County History" Constable, London.
- Emmet, AM & Heath, J (1989). *The Moths and Butterflies of Great Britain and Ireland 7, part 1: HesperIIDae-Nymphalidae - the butterflies*. Harley Books.
- Gladman, J (1990). Letter from Wales. *LES Newsletter* 5, 7.
- Goddard, D (1980). *Ashby Canal - report of survey of aquatic and riparian invertebrates 1980*. Leicestershire Museums Service.
- Hall-Smith, DH (1985). Clouded yellows in Leicestershire. *Bull AES*, 44, 194-197.
- Morris, R (1988). *Butterflies of the Hinckley district*. Hinckley & District Natural History Society.
- Morris, R (1989). The hawkmoths (Lepidoptera: Sphingidae) of the Hinckley district. *LES Occasional Publications Series Number 2*.
- Murray, DP (1946). *Limentis camilla* L. in Leicestershire. *Ent Rec J Var*, 58, 154-155.
- Primavesi, AL & Evans, PA (1988). *Flora of Leicestershire*. Leicestershire Museum, Art Galleries and Records Service.

Figure 1. The Hinckley and District Study Area



SYSTEMATIC LISTING

The following descriptions of the butterflies of the Hinckley district are arranged according to the nomenclature of Emmet & Heath (1989). Maps of the distribution of species are appended at the end of the systematic listing. The numbers following each map reference give the number of tetrads of a total of 44 where the species has been recorded.

Family: HESPERIIDAE (the Skippers)

1526 *Thymelicus sylvestris* Poda (Small skipper; map 1; 23/44)

Common throughout England and Wales usually being found in discrete colonies in rough grassland and roadside verges. The VCH (Bouskell, 1907) reported the species in the Ambion/Shenton area prior to 1907 while Buckler (1954) commented upon its continued presence in this location. During the late 1950s and through the 1960s the butterfly was regularly recorded in the Earl Shilton area by Raske (records held by the Leicestershire Museums Service). The few records of the 1970s were followed by many in the 1980s with seven in 1990. The species has been recorded throughout the district in suitable habitats with a maximum of 59 being noted at Burbage Common on 25.vii.89. The flight periods noted locally concur with the literature (June-July) although one was seen at a Barwell garden on the late date of 18.ix.90. [The similar Essex skipper has not been noted in the district].

1531 *Ochlodes venata* Bremer & Grey (Large skipper; map 2; 19/44)

As with the small skipper, this species frequents rough grassland and can be expected to be encountered throughout England and Wales with some extension into Scotland. Locally, the butterfly does not seem to be as common as the small skipper. The first record for the district seems to be from Earl Shilton (28.vi.59) with the same area providing all of the 1960s records (Raske). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the species was noted from many parts of the area with Burbage Common seeming to be the major stronghold. At this site high numbers of large skippers were noted during the summer of 1989 with a maximum of 45 being seen on 24.vi.89.

1532 *Erynnis tages* L. (Dingy skipper; map 3; 4/44)

The MGBGI (Emmet & Heath, 1989) reports this species as being the most widespread of the skipper butterflies. The species is usually on the wing from mid-May to late June with an occasional second emergence. Its main foodplant seems to be birds foot trefoil but despite the apparent widespread distribution of the foodplant in the district (Primavesi & Evans, 1988) the butterfly is rare, possibly extinct. The only records located to date all come from the Shenton/Ambion area: Ambion Wood on 24.ii.54 (Buckler, 1954) and 1970s (Leicestershire Museums Service); Shenton Cutting on 5.vi.72, 11.vi.72, 25.vi.72 and 23.vi.73 (Arnold, Arnold & Thomas, 1981).

1534 *Pyrgus malvae* L. (Grizzled skipper; map 4; 5/44)

Found throughout much of England although Leicestershire may be near to its northern limits. Only five records of the species have been located for the Hinckley district although Buckler (1954) commented on its presence at Ambion Wood. In the 1970s the butterfly was found in the Ambion area (Leicestershire Museums Service), Normanton Park in 1971 (also Leicestershire Museums Service) and at Shenton Cutting on 11.vi.72 (Arnold, Arnold & Thomas, 1981). The only other record is of one at Burbage Common on 16.vi.89. It is likely that the species is overlooked rather than extinct in the district although it is probable that there are only a few remnant populations present.

Family: PIERIDAE (Whites, sulphurs)

1541 *Leptidea sinapsis* L. (Wood white; map 5; 3/44)

This butterfly, characterised by its "sloppy" flight, is fairly restricted in its British range with main populations being associated with woodlands. The MGBGI (Emmet & Heath, 1989) reports that young coniferous plantations are possibly instrumental in the slight spread of the wood white from its recognised distribution although some observers have not experienced this (Gladman, 1990). In Leicestershire the species is probably extinct with the likelihood that the last county record came from the Earl Shilton quarries area (now being filled in) during 1976 (Arnold, Arnold & Thomas, 1981). The only other records from the district also come from the same general area. The VCH (Bouskell, 1907) reports the butterfly present at Earl Shilton during 1880 while an unconfirmed sighting of two possible wood whites was made at nearby Croft Hill on 7.v.89 (Anon, 1990).

1545 *Colias crocea* Geoffroy (Clouded yellow; map 6; 7/44)

This migrant species will, in suitable years, expand rapidly from its continental base into Britain. 1983 proved to be one of the best "clouded yellow years" ever recorded and Leicestershire had its fair share of sightings (Hall-Smith, 1985). The same year also gave the first known records of the butterfly for the Hinckley district with eight sightings being reported including records from Barwell and Burbage villages, Shenton Cutting, Sutton Cheney etc (Hall-Smith, 1985). On 15.viii.83 Shenton Cutting was reported to have held at least 15 of the species possibly as a result of successful breeding of earlier migrants. A Burbage garden hosted a single butterfly in the summer of 1984 (no exact date but June-July period) while Shenton Cutting again had a clouded yellow in the same year (no exact date). In 1990 the same Burbage garden had a single butterfly on 11.viii.90.

1546 *Gonopteryx rhamni* L. (Brimstone; map 7; 27/44)

Despite the relatively infrequent occurrence of its major foodplant, buckthorn, in the area the brimstone butterfly is widely distributed and fairly common throughout the survey area. Surprisingly, no records of this distinctive butterfly have been located prior to 1967 when it was first noted in

in the Potters Marston area (7.viii.67; Leicestershire Museums Service). Although never seen in any numbers the species has been recorded in every month except December. The earliest record was one in a Barwell garden on 28.1.90! Burbage Common held at least nine of the species on 30.iv.89. Larvae were found feeding on cotoneaster leaves in a Burbage garden on 18.iv.85 but it is not known if imagos successfully developed.

1549 *Pieris brassicae* L. (Large white; map 8; 28/44)

An abundant species in most years throughout Britain often supplemented by migrations from Europe. The commonness of the butterfly is reflected in the Hinckley area where it has been recorded in 28/44 tetrads. Surprisingly, not usually recorded in high numbers although a Burbage garden held 30 on 19.vii.89. The earliest located record was at Normanton Park as recently as 7.viii.67!

1550 *Pieris rapae* L. (Small white; map 9; 29/44)

Another abundant species often seen in gardens. Noted from 29/44 tetrads with 50 being seen at Croft on 21.v.89. As with the large white, the first local record seems to have been at Normanton Park on 7.viii.67.

1551 *Pieris napi* L. (Green-veined white; map 10; 21/44)

Another abundant species being widespread throughout the British Isles. First recorded near Huncote on 27.vii.67, the species has been well recorded in the district during the 1980s. Twenty one were seen at Burbage Common on 16.viii.89. Only three reports have been located for 1990. While the records suggest a widespread distribution in the district it is likely that the species is currently under-recorded.

1552 *Anthocharis cardamines* L. (Orange tip; map 11; 21/44)

A nationally common and widespread butterfly of early summer with the male with its orange wing tips being unmistakable. Widespread throughout the Hinckley area as are its main foodplants of lady's smock and garlic mustard. The first local record came from the Burbage area in 1968 with up to 14 being seen over the fields adjacent to the Brake Spinney, Peckleton on 8.vi.86.

Family: LYCAENIDAE (Blues and hairstreaks)

1553 *Callophrys rubi* L. (Green hairstreak; map 12; 1/44)

Fairly widespread throughout Britain. Uncommon, if not extinct in the Hinckley area. "One or two" were noted occasionally in the Hinckley area during 1950-1960 but no further details are available (Arnold, Arnold & Thomas, 1981).

1557 *Quercusia quercus* L. (Purple hairstreak; map 13; 2/44)

A species mainly confined to the southern half of Britain with Leicestershire being near its northern limit. Commonly seen near the tops of oak trees particularly at Burbage Common and Woods near Hinckley. The only other known local site is Ambion Wood (17.viii.84) although it is likely that other woods may hold small populations. Whilst normally found in July and August, a single butterfly was seen at Burbage Common on 15.iv.85 probably as a result of a premature emergence.

1558 *Satyrrium w-album* Knoch (White-letter hairstreak; map 14; 3/44)

Originally fairly widespread in England this butterfly has declined because of the effect of Dutch elm disease on its host plant. However, there is a suggestion that wych elm may be an acceptable alternative food plant. Only four local records have been located for this species. The VCH (Bouskell, 1907) reported its presence at Ambion Wood prior to 1907 while two records held by the Leicestershire Museums Service indicated the presence of the butterfly in the Huncote area during the 1970s. A sighting of the species at Burbage Wood on 14.viii.83 is unconfirmed but there is a distinct possibility that the observation is genuine because of the effect of the 1983 hot summer.

1561 *Lycaena phlaeas* L. (Small copper; map 15; 22/44)

A common species throughout Britain found in a wide range of habitats. The butterfly is particularly fond of sunning itself often returning repeatedly to the same spot despite disturbance. Widespread in the Hinckley district although the first local record seems to have been in 1958 at Burbage Wood. Never found in any numbers although twelve were recorded at Fosse Meadows on 24.ix.89. Most local records come from the period August to October although the earliest sighting was May. The limited amount of data available suggests that two generations each year is not uncommon.

1574 *Polyommatus icarus* Rottenburg (Common blue; map 16; 20/44)

Widespread and common throughout Britain in suitable habitats where its major foodplant, bird's foot trefoil, grows. The most favoured habitats are unimproved grassland and road verges. The earliest local record is from the Shenton area as recently as 1970 but the species has since been recorded in 19/44 tetrads. Ten were seen at Shenton Cutting on 20.viii.87 but this area has become less attractive to the species as the short turf, essential for the growth of bird's foot trefoil, has been overgrown with rank grass and hawthorn scrub. A late example of the butterfly was noted at the Ashby Canal near Stoke Golding on 16.x.80.

1580 *Celastrina argiolus* L. (Holly blue; map 17; 8/44)

Found over much of southern England and the Midlands this butterfly tends to be most commonly recorded where its food-plants (holly and ivy) are growing. The species is bivoltine with the early generation being on the wing April-June and the later generation flying August-September. Until the 1980s the species was virtually unrecorded in the district while in 1990 the species has been widely seen in the area. The bivoltine nature in 1990 was clearly demonstrated with four records during May and the remainder in August.

Family: NYMPHALIDAE (Admirals, nymphalids, browns)

1584 *Ladoga camilla* L. (White admiral; map 18; 1/44)

A woodland species restricted to the south of England and never very common even when it does occur. There is some thought that the species may be extending its range (MGBGI). Leicestershire is very much at the extremes of the species' range and it is not surprising that only two records have been located from the Hinckley district both from Burbage Wood. Murray (1946) reported seeing the butterfly in July of 1945 while the Leicestershire Museums Service holds a record from 1958. The return of a coppice management system with the creation of glades and dappled sunlit areas in both Burbage and Sheepy Woods may encourage the return of the species to the site.

1590 *Vanessa atalanta* L. (Red admiral; map 19; 21/44)

A widespread nymphalid found throughout Britain. The species is particularly fond of nectar-producing flowers such as *Buddleia*, *Rudbeckia* and *Sedum* but can also be found feeding at ivy and rotting fruit. The British resident population (which overwinters to a certain extent) is usually complemented by migrations from Europe and North Africa. The butterfly is commonly encountered throughout the Hinckley district but, as with other species, recording has only recently started. The earliest record is from the Burbage area in 1968 with thirteen being seen at Burbage Common on 16.viii.89. The red admiral has been seen in all but the first three months of the year and has even been found in an overnight MVL trap at Barwell (30.ix.90). Most records come from the autumn period.

1591 *Cynthia cardui* L. (Painted lady; map 20; 13/44)

A migrant species which has, at one time or another, been found in most part of Britain. Its distribution reflects the route of migration and the degree of local breeding. There is no evidence of over-wintering in Britain. In the Hinckley area most records come from gardens with a few from rural locations. Most commonly seen August-September but occasionally October. The highest number of records for any year seems to have been the eleven seen in 1988. Only one record has been found for 1990 (Burbage, 11.viii.90).

1593 *Aglais urticae* L. (Small tortoiseshell; map 21; 29/44)

Widely distributed and can be abundant. Hibernates over winter and will appear early the next year when weather conditions are acceptable. Consequently, in warm years the butterfly may be seen in every month. In the Hinckley district the species has been noted in 29/44 tetrads often in some numbers. Surprisingly, the first known record for the area was at Burbage in 1968! The highest number seen at one time was 48 at Burbage Common on 11.vii.89 while one hibernating butterfly was observed on Christmas Eve 1989 in a local church. Seen in the area in all months of the year except January and February.

1594 *Nymphalis polychloros* L. (Large tortoiseshell; map 22; 1/44)

This butterfly was fairly widespread, although local, in England early this century. Now it is considered to be absent from Britain as an endemic species. Occasional reports of migrants are received but numbers are very low and reports erratic. The VCH (Bouskell, 1907) records the presence of the butterfly in the Ambion Wood region in the last century while Buckler (1954) commented that the species was taken at the same site since the publication of the VCH.

1597 *Inachis io* L. (Peacock; map 23; 29/44)

Another common, widespread and often abundant nymphalid found throughout much of Britain. Hibernates overwinter. Not surprisingly the species has been recorded throughout the Hinckley district (28/44 tetrads) but no records predate 1968 (Burbage). The butterfly has been seen in most months of the year including one on the wing in the Sketchley area of Hinckley on 17.i.90. Thirty were recorded in a Burbage garden on 24.vii.89.

1598 *Polygonia c-album* L. (Comma; map 24; 18/44)

Widespread throughout England and Wales although there is thought that its range may be decreasing. There is some historical indication to suggest that in the last century the hop was the main foodplant with a change to nettle in the present century (Emmet & Heath, 1989). The earliest record located for the Hinckley district was at Ambion Wood on 18.iv.36 (Buckler, 1938). Since then there have been sporadic reports until the 1980s when more systematic recording showed that the butterfly was often seen although never in any numbers. 1989 was a particularly good year for records with eleven being noted at Burbage Common on 9.ix.89.

1607 *Argynnis aglaja* L. (Dark green fritillary; map 25; 2/44)

Fairly widespread in much of Britain but patchy in the Midland counties. Two unconfirmed records come from the study area both by the same observers. The first came from a Burbage garden (20.vii.86) while the second was two days later at the Brake Spinney, Peckleton on 22.vii.86. At best the butterfly must be considered a vagrant in the area and it is unlikely that a viable population exists.

1608 *Argynnis paphia* L. (Silver-washed fritillary; map 26; 1/44)

A species with a mainly south-western distribution, this fritillary is in decline in Britain. In the last century it occurred throughout England and Wales and, possibly, into Scotland. It is thought that this species has suffered from the decline of traditional woodland management causing an increase in shading in such habitats and the fragmentation of colonies reducing the opportunity for recolonisation. The Hinckley district has only one record of the butterfly, unconfirmed, at Burbage Wood on 14.viii.83. This may have been a genuine sighting of the butterfly considering the effect of the hot summer of that year on many species.

1614 *Pararge aegeria* L. (Speckled wood; map 27; 12/44)

This butterfly is common in deciduous and coniferous woodlands throughout southern Britain and is increasing its range northwards. Flight activity is dependent upon sunshine with the males demonstrating territorial behaviour in their chosen "sunspot". The species is confined, in the main, to woodland sites in the Hinckley district although occasionally it is recorded from gardens. The main sites for the area seem to be Ambion Wood, Sheepy Wood, Burbage Wood and the Brake Spinney although it is likely that other spinneys support populations. The first local record was in 1958 from Burbage Wood while in the 1980s the butterfly has been more widely noted. Investigation of suitable habitats in the district may well unearth other colonies. Presently noted from 12/44 tetrads.

1615 *Lasiomatta megera* L. (Wall; map 28; 21/44)

Widespread throughout England and Wales, the Wall butterfly can be found in a variety of habitats. Increasingly being noted from suburban gardens where it may be seen sunning itself on walls and fences. The first local records came from Burbage Wood (1958) and Croft (27.vii.67). The increasing awareness of butterflies by local recorders in the 1980s showed the wide distribution of the species in the district with the butterfly now having been recorded from 21/44 of the survey tetrads. Never recorded in any numbers with 6 being seen in the Burbage area on 24.viii.85.

1625 *Pyronia tithonus* L. (Gatekeeper; map 29; 16/44)

Widespread throughout southern Britain this species is steadily increasing its range northwards. The first record for the Hinckley area was from Burbage Common in 1958 with three further records in the 1970s. The 1980s saw an upsurge of the butterfly in the district particularly in 1984 after the previous year's drought conditions. By the end of 1990 the species was being regularly recorded throughout the district.

1626 *Maniola jurtina* L. (Meadow brown; map 30; 22/44)

A widespread and often abundant species in suitable habitats. While grasslands are the main haunts it can be encountered in woodland rides, marshes, scrubby areas and gardens. Not recorded in the Hinckley area prior to 1958 and it was not until the 1980s that recording of the species showed its true distribution in the area. It is likely that most rough grasslands carry a population. At this time Burbage Common seems to be the main population centre.

1629 *Aphantopus hyperantus* L. (Ringlet; map 31; 7/44)

A fairly widespread species in the British Isles tending to form well-defined colonies in a variety of habitats with a preference for damp sheltered areas such as woodland rides, railway cuttings and lanes. It tends not to favour dry situations. Records from the Hinckley area suggest that the species is limited to a handful of sites, in particular Burbage Common and Shenton Cutting although it is likely that other colonies remain to be discovered. Recorded from the Shenton/Ambion area by the VCH (Bouskell, 1907), the number of records located is sparse with only three other reports up to the 1980s. Since 1980 there have been a further seven records located.

1627 *Coenonympha pamphilus* L. (Small heath; map 32; 12/44)

A butterfly found throughout the British Isles and, in suitable habitats, it may be abundant. Because of its preference for rough grassland the effect of agriculture may have affected the status of the species in the Hinckley area. First recorded in 1968 from Burbage the butterfly is encountered throughout the district despite records having been located for only 12/44 tetrads. Some apparently suitable sites e.g. Ashby Canal corridor and Fosse Meadows, have no records but this is most likely due to the lack of recording rather than absence of the species. As with so many other butterflies, Burbage Common seems to be the stronghold for this species with 38 being seen on 19.vi.89.

Key for maps:



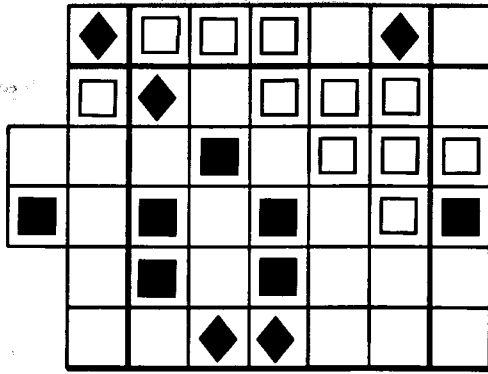
recorded before 1980



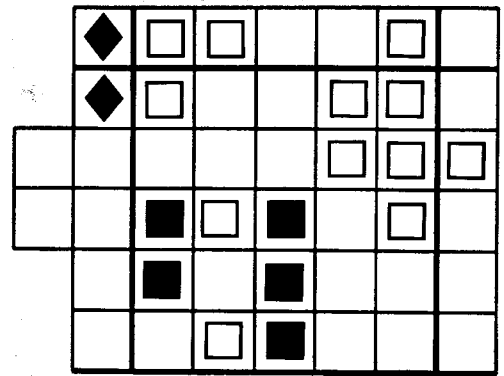
recorded after 1980



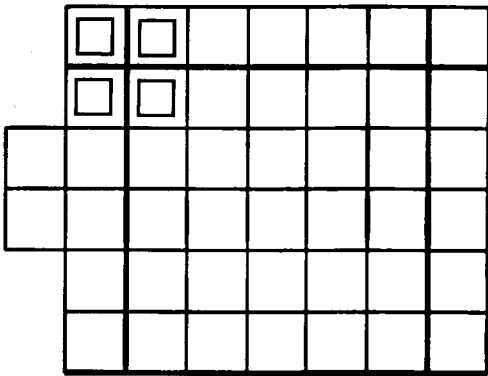
recorded in both periods



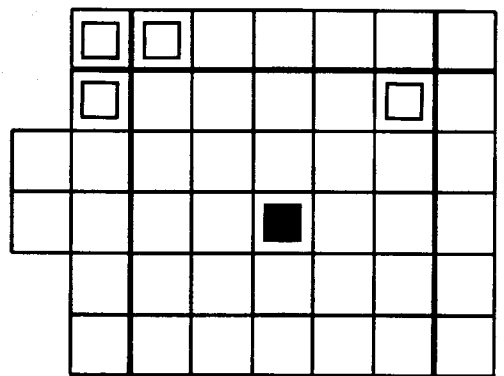
Map 1. *Thymelicus sylvestris*



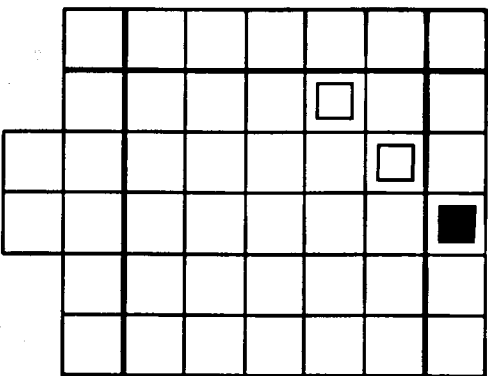
Map 2. *Ochlodes venata*



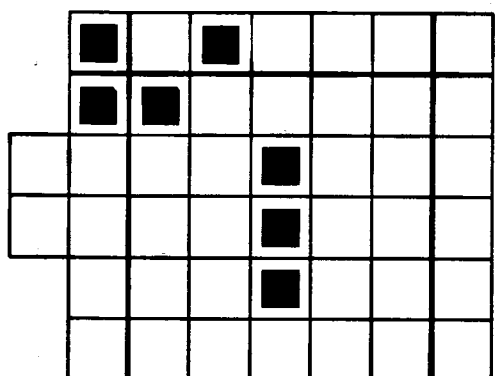
Map 3. *Erynnis tages*



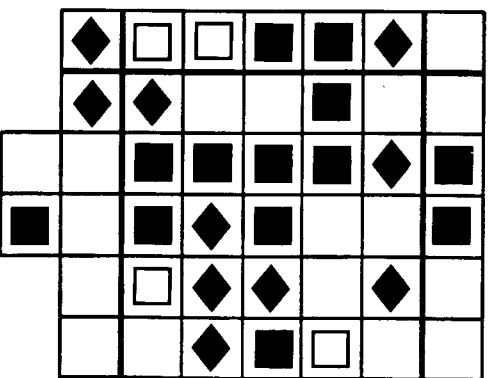
Map 4. *Pyrgus malvae*



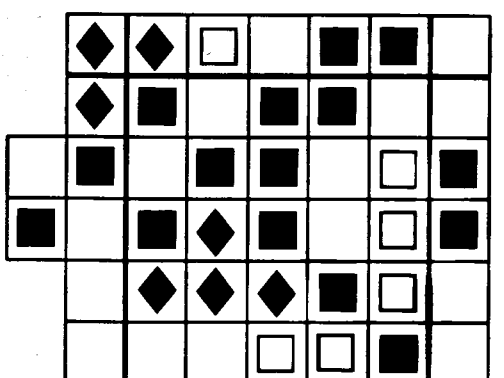
Map 5. *Leptidea sinapsis*



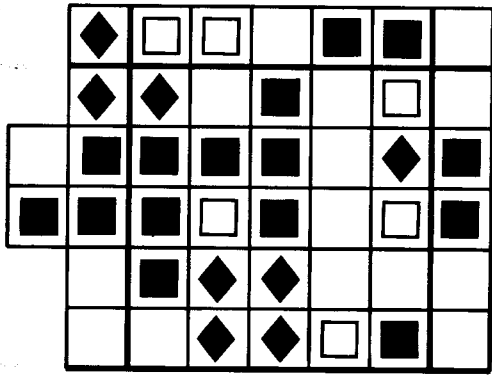
Map 6. *Colias crocea*



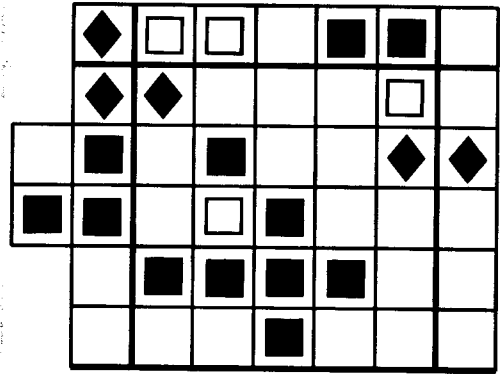
Map 7. *Gonopteryx rhamni*



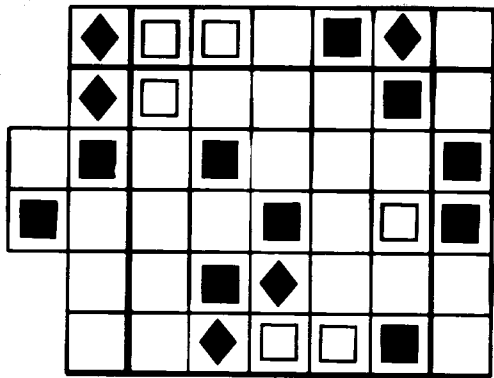
Map 8. *Pieris brassicae*



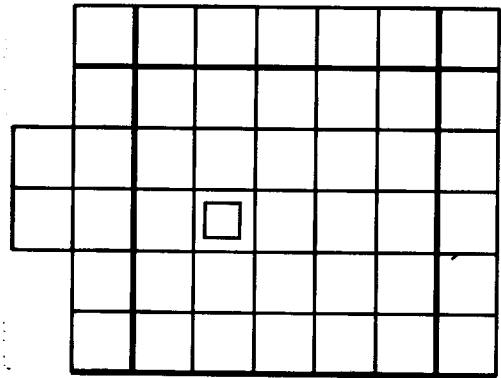
Map 9. *Pieris rapae*



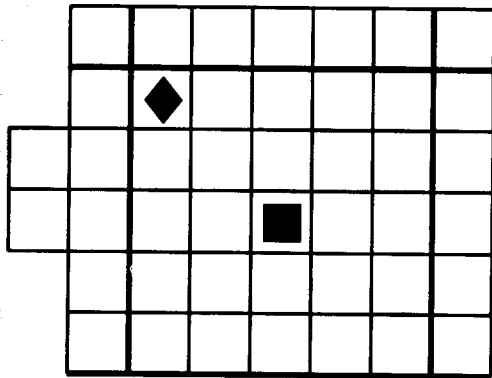
Map 10. *Pieris napi*



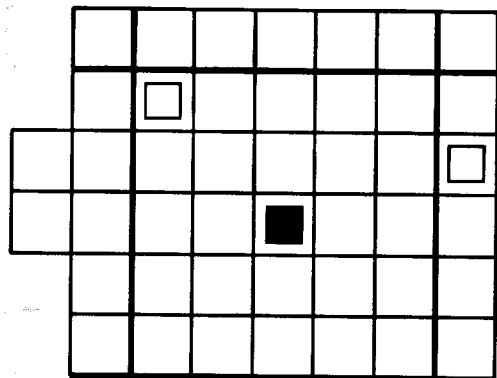
Map 11. *Anthocharis cardamines*



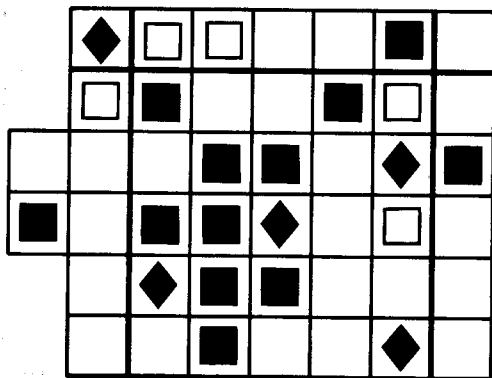
Map 12. *Callophrys rubi*



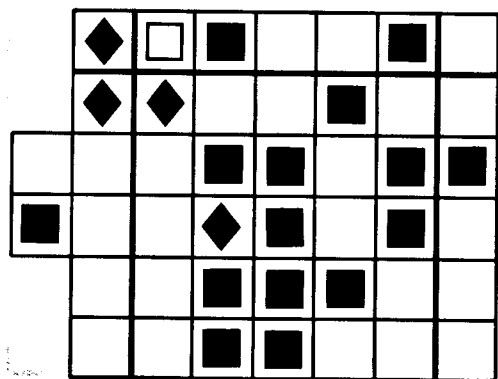
Map 13. *Quercusia quercus*



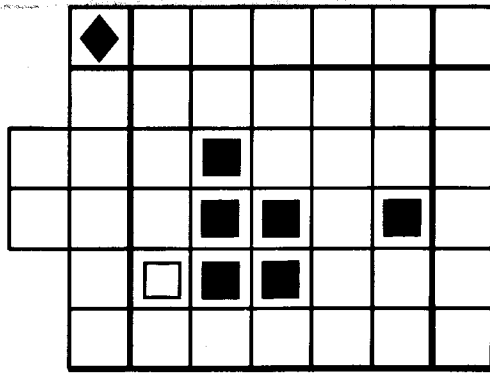
Map 14. *Satyrrium w-album*



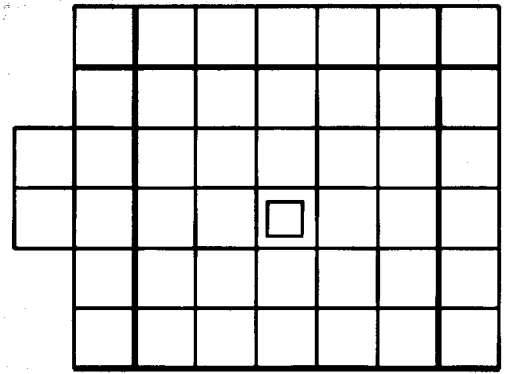
Map 15. *Lycaena plaeas*



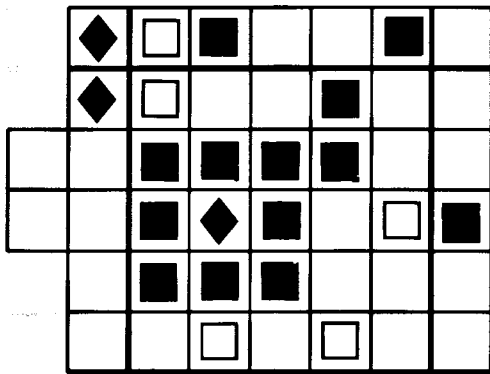
Map 16. *Polyomattus icarus*



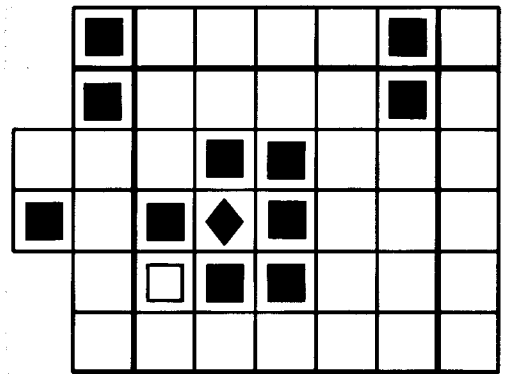
Map 17. *Celastrina argiolus*



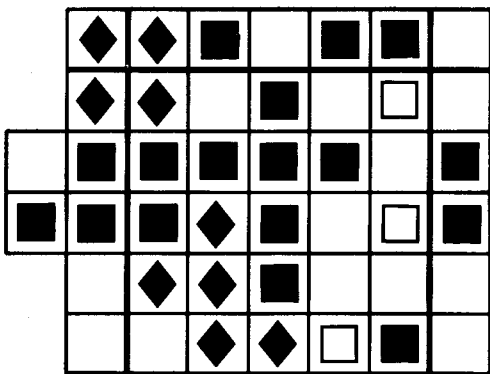
Map 18. *Ladoga camilla*



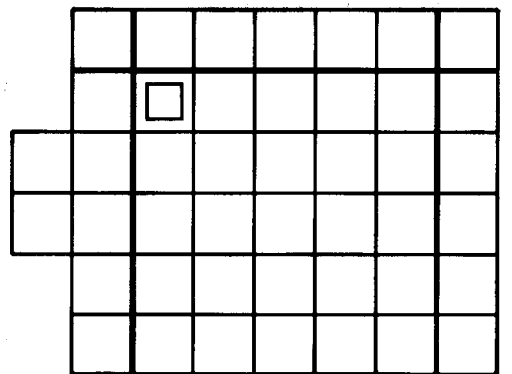
Map 19. *Vanessa atalanta*



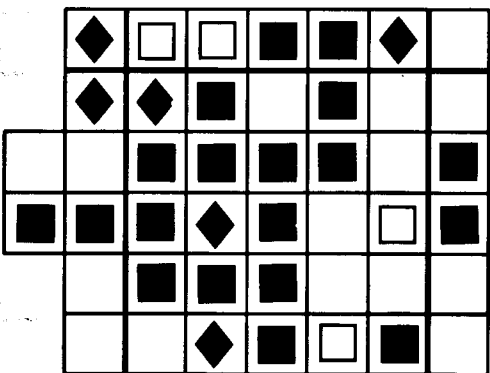
Map 20. *Cynthia cardui*



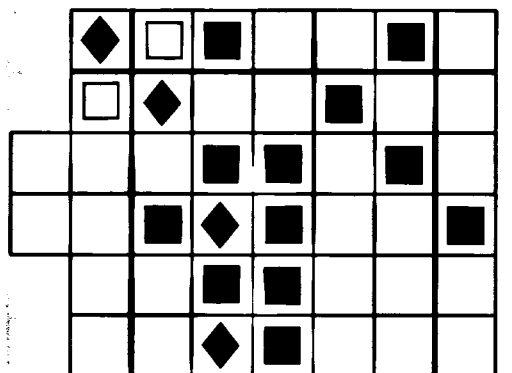
Map 21. *Aglais urticae*



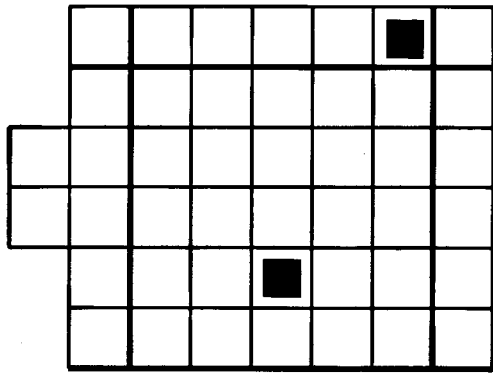
Map 22. *Nymphalis polychloros*



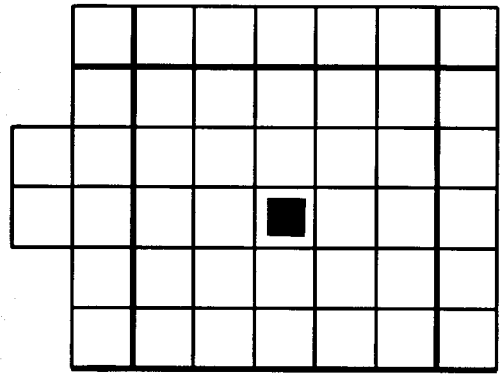
Map 23. *Inachis io*



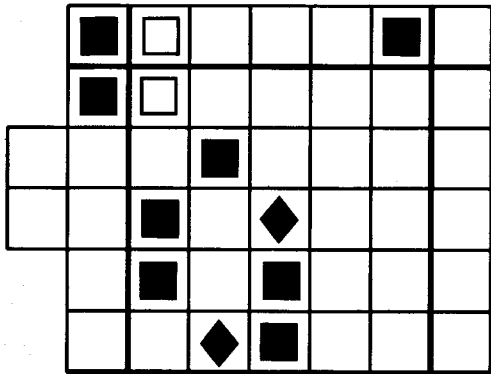
Map 24. *Polygonia c-album*



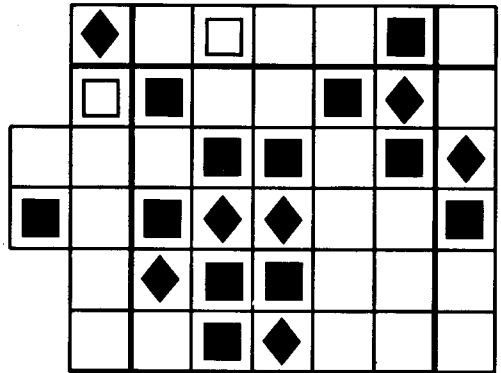
Map 25. *Argynnis aglaja*



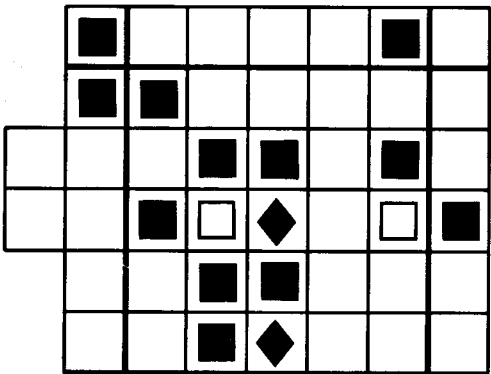
Map 26. *Argynnis paphia*



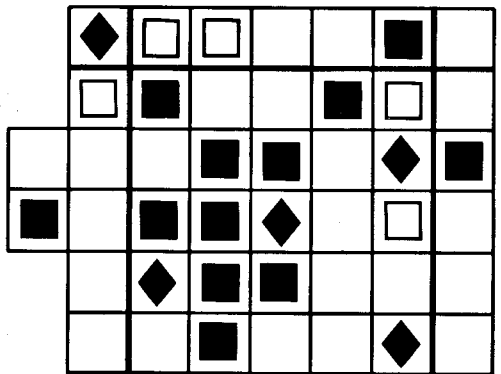
Map 27. *Pararge aegeria*



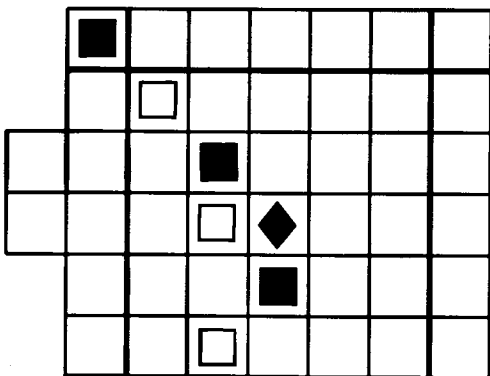
Map 28. *Lasiommata megera*



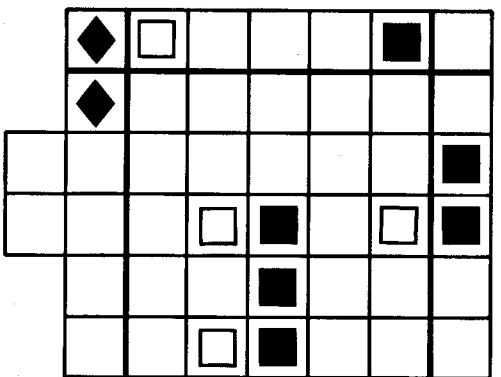
Map 29. *Pyronia tithonus*



Map 30. *Maniola jurtina*



Map 31. *Aphantopus hyperantus*



Map 32. *Coenonympha pamphilus*